Instructor: Evgenia Fotiou  
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Office: 3312 Sterling Hall  
Office Hours: TR 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Course Description:
This course will explore the discourses (both essentialist and social constructionist) that have dominated women’s reproductive health cross-culturally looking at both social science and biomedical literature. The class will focus on the way female bodies, sexuality and reproductive health have been constructed within biomedicine with some selected examples from different cultural contexts. It will adopt a biocultural approach (looking at the intersection between biology and culture) in exploring questions such as: what are some of the most common reproductive health issues for women, why is morbidity from STDs and other reproductive health issues higher in women than men, what are the risks and benefits associated with various methods of contraception, what are the most common ways that female reproductive health issues are being treated medically, what is the role of nutrition and common environmental toxins on reproductive health and how does medicalization affect reproductive health.

On certain days we will focus on the biomedical discourse through readings from the medical literature, while on others we will focus on readings from the social sciences. This class is not meant to be comprehensive but to touch on some of the most important discourses and provoke further reading and research. The following questions will guide the discussion of each topic: (1) what are the biological as well as social factors that affect the issue, (2) how do these factors affect different women (lesbian, immigrant women, indigenous women etc.) (3) how can women become advocates for themselves as well as take better care of themselves?

Course Objectives:

- Analyze the reproductive and sexual health of women in different cultural contexts.
- Familiarize students with recent biomedical literature on female reproductive health.
- Understand the vocabulary used in medical literature.
- Identify major biological, socio-cultural and environmental factors that affect female reproductive health.
• Understand that biology and culture cannot be viewed separately and any investigation of a health issue has to take both into account.
• To extend and refine students' capacity to read critically.
• To extend students' abilities to communicate these critical skills effectively (orally and in writing)

Course Format:
In-class lectures, and directed group discussions of course materials and projects. Students will be expected to read assigned readings before class and be prepared to discuss them.

Required Texts:


(this will be abbreviated in the course schedule as WGH)

All books for the course are available for purchase at A Room of One's Own Feminist Bookstore, 307 W. Johnson St. Books will also be on reserve at H.C. White (College Library). Other readings will be on electronic reserve at College Library.

Requirements:
Course requirements will include written and oral communication, teacher-student and a student-student collaboration and active learning.

1. Required readings should be completed prior to class.

2. Regular attendance and class participation (20% of final grade): Attendance is mandatory. Any absence in lectures, other than officially excused absences by the university (i.e. for religious observances), will affect your attendance and participation grade. You are also expected to attend the entire class; partial absences will affect your attendance and participation grade. If you have to miss a class or part of a class, please notify me ahead of time if possible and arrange to make up the work covered during your absence.

You may miss the equivalent of one week (that is, 2 class periods) with no penalty. Your participation grade will be lowered by one point for each absence from 3-5 absences. If you miss the equivalent of 3 weeks (that is, 6 class periods) or more, you may fail the course. In addition, if you are 20 or more minutes late to any class, it is considered an absence. In the case of an
emergency, you should notify me before the missed class, and certainly no later than 24 hours after.

Active participation in class discussion means you have done the reading and are willing to engage in intellectual exploration of the themes and topics brought up in the material. All contributions to class discussion need not be articulate, well-thought-out or scholarly, but they should be RELEVANT! A consistent pattern of participation in lecture and evidence of critical insight will be significantly rewarded. In assessing your grade, I will consider both the quantity and quality of comments made in class.

3. **Written Responses** (count toward your participation grade): You will be expected to write 2 short (1,000 word maximum) written responses to class material on weeks of your choosing. One of the responses should be on one of the weeks prior to the midterm (weeks 2-8) and the second should be on one of the weeks following the midterm (weeks 9-14). These responses should be a comparative critique of the week's readings. You should identify a theme around which to organize your discussion of at least three of the readings, and compare/contrast them. What issues were brought up in the readings that are particularly interesting/relevant to the course, and how do the different authors address those issues? You should briefly summarize the argument of each source, assess its strengths and weaknesses, compare the sources to each other, and have an over-arching argument that ties your compare/contrast of the various articles together.

4. **Discussion facilitation** (10% of final grade): You will be required to work with a group of your classmates and take responsibility for stimulating and leading discussion on readings assigned for one class period during the semester. The presentation should consist of three parts: (1) the authors’ arguments; (2) your critique of the arguments; and (3) questions to start the class discussion. Please **analyze** rather than summarize the readings. Group members will read material, discuss it before class with the group members, contextualize the material with other class readings or lecture/discussions, and jointly draw up a list of questions or points for class discussion. Each group will meet with me, out of class, prior to the in-class facilitation presentation to review your plans and to let me know if you will need any computer/technology equipment set up ahead of time. These presentations are intended to promote more in-depth critical reading, individual participation and dialogue. The presentation will be evaluated on the quality and accuracy of its substantive content, the organization and creativity embodied in the form of the presentation, and perhaps most importantly, how well you engage other students in discussion and activities.

These facilitations must happen the day they are scheduled; if a problem arises, you must notify me in advance. The schedule and signup sheet for group presentations will be provided during the first week of class.

5. **Midterm Exam** (25% of final grade): format to be announced.
6. **Research paper** (35% of final grade): Each student will be asked to submit an abstract of the proposed topic for the final paper no later than the class on **February 24**. The final paper topic should deal with a pressing issue/problem/question or controversy in the field of reproductive health. This description should include:

- the problem statement,
- what makes this an important issue in women’s reproductive health,
- what are the controversial aspects and the different perspectives on the issue,
- potential sources of information, i.e. internet sites, books, journal articles; they should include both social science and biomedical sources.

You should familiarize yourselves with PubMed to research your paper.

The final paper should include:

1) the significance of the issue/problem/question,
2) the background information,
3) a brief narrative about what is known about the issue/problem/question, and the different perspectives on the issue,
4) an analysis of the issue from the evidence presented.

The paper should be well researched, but not more than 12 pages in length (4,000-5,000 words), not including the bibliography. The paper is due no later than **April 28**.

7. **Final Exam** (10% of final grade): format to be announced.

**Resources:** Throughout the semester, I will use Learn@UW to post important information (handouts, required readings, additional readings to supplement the required materials, links to useful research and writing resources, etc.). The information posted online will NOT be distributed in class. It is your responsibility to check the site for updates.

**Grading Scale:**

- A: 93-100
- AB: 88-92
- B: 83-87
- BC 78-82
- C: 70-77
- D: 65-69
- F: under 65

**Late, Missed, or Incomplete Work:** Except for reasons beyond your control such as serious illness or emergency, your grade will be reduced each day an assignment remains incomplete or not turned in. After a week, I will not accept late, incomplete, or missed work, and you will receive an "F" for that portion of your grade.

Incomplete grades will not be given EXCEPT in situations of serious illness or family emergency, which must be documented.

**Accessibility:** Please let us know if you require any alternative accommodations or if you have any accessibility concerns that may affect your performance in this course. The McBurney Resource Center ([www.mcburney.wisc.edu](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu)), 1305 Linden Dr. 263-2741, TTY 263-6393, provides useful assistance and documentation for a range of needs and concerns.
**Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism means presenting the words or ideas of others without giving them credit. It is your responsibility to learn what constitutes plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. In general, if your paper implies that you are the author, the ideas and words must be your own.

If you use someone else’s exact words, they should be enclosed in quotation marks with the exact source listed. Please, refer to the Dean of Students’ web page for further information: [www.wisc.edu/students/amsa.htm](http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsa.htm)

Examples of **Academic Misconduct** include but are not limited to: cutting and pasting portions of a text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation; paraphrasing from the web without crediting the source; using another person’s ideas, words, or research and presenting it as your own by not properly crediting the originator; signing another person’s name to an attendance sheet. For more details refer again to the Dean of Students’ web page: [www.wisc.edu/students/amsa.htm](http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsa.htm) This Website also has useful information on what do to if you are charged with academic misconduct.

**Cell phone and laptop policy:** Turn your cell phones off or to the “silent” mode during class. Students seen texting, “chatting,” or checking email on their laptop computers or cell phones will be asked to leave class for the day and will be considered absent for the class period.

**Course Schedule:**

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction and Main Concepts</th>
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| **T 1/18** | WGH: Ch. 1  
| **R 1/20** | **Gender and Health**  
WGH: Ch. 2  
Martin. Pp. 3-23.  
**Recommended:**  

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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>The Female Body</th>
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| **T 1/25** | The female body in biomedical discourse  
WGH: Ch. 5  
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Sexuality</th>
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| R 1/27 | **The female body cross-culturally**  

| T 2/1 | **Medicalization of female sexuality and female sexual dysfunction**  
Orgasm Inc. (documentary screening)  

| R 2/3 | **Female sexuality cross-culturally**  

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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Genital Surgeries</th>
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| T 2/8 | **Genital Surgeries Cross-culturally**  
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Menstruation</th>
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| T 2/15 | WGH: Ch. 19  
| R 2/17 | Menstruation in medical discourse  

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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Menstruation cross-culturally</th>
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<tr>
<td>T 2/22</td>
<td>Buckley and Gottlieb, Ch. 2, 3, 7, 10 (Ch. 1 optional)</td>
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| R 2/24 | Menstrual Suppression  
### Week 7
**Contraception / Family Planning**

**T 3/1**


**Politics of contraception**

Film: Body and Soul


**Recommended:**

### Week 8
**T 3/8**
**Midterm**

**R 3/10**
**Gynecologic disorders and their treatment**

WGH: Ch. 20, 22, 23


### Week 9
**Environment and Reproductive Health**

**T 3/22**


Simsa P, A Mihalyi, G Schoeters, G Koppen, CM Kyama, Den Hond EM, V Fulop, and TM D’Hooghe. 2010. Increased exposure to dioxin-like compounds is associated with endometriosis in a case-control study in women. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* 20(5):681-
| R 3/24 | Invisible (documentary screening) |
| **Week 10** | |
| **Pregnancy and Childbirth** | |
| | Pregnancy and Childbirth Cross-culturally |
| | Martin. Pp. 54-70, 139-165. |
| **Week 11** | |
| | Medicalization of childbirth |
| | Browner CH, and N Press. 1996. The production of authoritative knowledge in American...
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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Abortion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>T 4/12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abortion Cross-culturally</strong></td>
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<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Menopause</th>
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<td><strong>T 4/19</strong></td>
<td><strong>Menopause and Culture</strong></td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
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<td><strong>R 4/28</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research paper due)</td>
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**Week 15**<br>**Conclusions – Future Directions**

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